



ELK GROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

Fire ♦ Emergency Medical ♦ Parks & Recreation

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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JANUARY 2003

INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHT

MELISSA ALVAREZ ENCOURAGES "CLAY'N AROUND"

Melissa Alvarez, owner of "Just Clay'n Around," encourages people of all ages to tap into their creative side. Alvarez has teamed up with the Elk Grove CSD Department of Parks and Recreation to offer a new series of children and adult ceramics classes this winter from her Elk Grove studio.

Alvarez launched her business in Old Town Elk Grove just a few months ago. As a long-time art lover, Melissa previously helped run her husband's painting business and provided color consultations. Ceramics has been an art medium she has enjoyed since high school. In fact, the gradual reduction of art programs in public schools was a motivating factor in starting her business.

"Kids don't experience enough art in schools and this gives them that opportunity," said Alvarez.

Working with the CSD Department of Parks & Recreation, Alvarez will introduce three new children's classes this winter. Classes are geared to young people ages 5-10. "Kids Clay Creations" will encourage free form clay play and painting. Other classes, "Create a Tea Party Set" and "Kids Bisque Art" focus on painting pre-formed ceramic objects. Classes are scheduled in January, February and March. Each class costs \$20 per student with an additional \$20 supply fee.

Melissa's teaching style attempts to bring out each student's hidden talents. Her hands-on approach breaks down detailed subjects step by step and allows development of age appropriate skills. Creativity, use of imagination, and fun are her ultimate goals for each student.

"Hearing the children talk about what they are creating...the excitement after projects come back [from being glazed], and seeing the sense of accomplishment is very rewarding."

For her adult students, Alvarez finds that the classes double as "art therapy" and an escape "out of your everyday rut." She finds unique rewards in her work with adults.

"Watching them allow time for themselves...Mom's make footprint platters and hand print plates that become heirlooms and cherished gifts. Each piece is an individual expression, an original piece of art."

This Winter, Alvarez will offer three adult classes through the CSD Parks and Recreation Department, "Mosaic Mirrors," "Family Tree Tiles," and "Baby's Footprints Platter." Daytime and evening classes are scheduled on Thursdays through January, February and March. "Mosaic Mirrors" costs \$55 per student to enroll and a \$20 supply fee. "Family Tree Tiles" and "Baby's Footprints Platter" cost \$20 per student with an additional \$20 supply fee payable the first day of class.

"Everybody has some type of artistic ability," says Alvarez. "I try to show my enthusiasm and allow them to see art isn't something to stress about."

Registration for Winter/Spring 2003 classes at the CSD Department of Parks and Recreation starts January 7. For more information about Melissa's classes at "Just Clay'n Around" or class registration, contact (916) 685-3917 or stop by her studio at 9052 Elk Grove Boulevard.



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